

CHAMBERS' EDINBURGH JOURNAL

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, EDITORS OF 'CHAMBERS'S INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE,' 'CHAMBERS'S EDUCATIONAL COURSE,' &c.

No. 300. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1849.

PRICE 1½d.

CONTENT.

THE saying of Mirabeau that 'words are things,' announced one of those discoveries of our fathers which the present age of appliance is busily employed in working out. In this spirit of the day, we showed some time ago, in a discourse on Spring, how words representing even material phenomena may be transferred from country to country, from language to language, till they entirely lose their adaptation, and yet retain their original meaning.* Thus the spring of the English is still with sentimentalists the really vernal season of the southern nations; and in spite of the evidence of the senses, our bare trees, desert gardens, and muddy fields, when their beautiful mantle of snow is hardly replaced by a blade of vegetation,

* Live in description, and look green in song.

If we suffer ourselves to be thus cheated by a word standing for a portion of the calendar, and open to anybody's verification, we are of course much more likely to be deceived in the estimate of those which indicate particular states of mind; and, as an instance of this delusion, we would now invoke the docile reader's attention to the word Content.

This is a word supposed to indicate a very enviable state of mind, implying the union of virtue and wisdom in the individual. It is used in this sense by all poets, and not a few philosophers; though it occurs only once in the Bible, and that with a different meaning, to which we shall presently allude.† A state of content, according to the popular idea, is not a state of happiness, for that in the present world is not only evanescent, but, in order to be sensibly felt, it must be intermingled with contrasts. It is less than bliss, and yet greater. It does not desire the excitement of joy: it will not take the trouble to be happy. It has no want, and therefore no wish, but is abundantly satisfied with itself. It is the Nirwana of the Brahmans, without its unconsciousness; but its whole consciousness is that of having nothing to regret, and nothing to sigh for. A contented man, therefore, is at least passively virtuous. He has nothing to grasp at, and therefore no temptation to transgress, but concentrating his self-satisfaction around him like a cloak, he defies the storm, without enjoying the sunshine.

If this is content in individuals, let us inquire what its effect would be upon the character of societies. Would not a savage people, satisfied with their savagism, remain for ever the *fera natura* of the human kind? Would they build themselves houses if they were con-

tented with huts? Would they trouble themselves even with huts, if a piece of bark stripped from a tree (as in Australia) afforded them what they considered adequate shelter? But this, it may be said, is beginning too early; for content cannot come into play till all discomfort ends. But comfort and discomfort are merely relative terms. What is the one in one state of society, and in one age, is the other in another; and until we can ascertain the exact point of civilisation we are destined by Providence to reach, it is in vain to look for public content. Societies, being merely aggregations of individuals, what is true of the nature of the former, must be true of the nature of the latter. There is a principle of movement in the human species which distinguishes it from the lower animal kingdom, and the termination of which is lost in the future. This principle is still more energetic in the most refined and accomplished individual of the present day than in the savage; a fact which proves that the farthest advance we have as yet made is only a stage on the way. In natural history, a correct description of the habits of an animal never becomes obsolete, whereas with human beings a few years frequently suffice to change the whole character and status. If our Saxon ancestors could revisit the earth, they would recognise no resemblance between themselves and their descendants whirling along from one end of the country to another on iron roads, and by the agency of fire. But the difference here is not greater than, judging by analogy, it will be, after a similar lapse of time, between us and our posterity; on the contrary, it is probably less great; for the principle to which it owes its existence has increased, as we have said, in energy, and may therefore be expected to produce still more remarkable results in the coming time.

This extensive way of viewing content may be said to be wrong. We may be told that by content we are merely to understand that equanimity of mind which is untroubled by unreasonable desires. But the feeling has existed in all states of society as well as the present; and at present it exists still more obviously in the lower than in the higher conditions, whether social or intellectual—more obviously in the lazzaroni of Naples than in the literati of London. Mankind have never moved in one consentaneous body. The mass has risen, not by a general inherent power, but by the leaven it contains of aspiring and energetic minds. Content is simply satisfaction with existing circumstances—a disinclination to change of any kind; and it is no more worthy of respect, we venture to say, in one class of circumstances than in another. Is it necessary to show that in this general and correct sense it is really a very bad thing? In one part of the British Islands we find large masses of the people contented to live in turf hovels, and to pursue the merest animal existence. Is it that

* Delusions and Illusions, Journal, No. 180.

† A single other instance is given in 'Hannay's Concordance'; but when Job says to his comforters, 'Be ye therefore content,' he means merely, 'Be quiet,' or 'Have done.'

we call virtuous? Is it that we call philosophical? In all our large cities are observed hordes of beings contented to live the lives of beggars, to walk about the streets in rags, and, satisfied in their idleness, to prey on their more industrious neighbours. Is that a thing to be commended by the poets? Certainly not; yet, if words have a meaning, these are mere varieties of the same quality of content which is the subject of so much laudation. We have had too much preaching about the virtue of content; for indeed mankind need no persuasive to indifference. The very opposite quality we uphold to be the true inspirer of virtue. Everything great, wise, lovely, or of good report, has originated in dissatisfaction with things as they are. Discontent has been the parent of civilisation, and is at this moment impelling society onward to its highest achievements. It could be wished that preachers and essayists would qualify their praise of content by a consideration of the evils which spring from it when unaccompanied by *Effort*!

But while we do not care to conceal our dissatisfaction with content in the ordinary sense of the word, let it not be understood that we advocate disquietude, or hold in any degree of tolerance a repining spirit. When a poor man implores a blessing upon his humble meal, and thanks God for the mercy, this by no means implies that he is content with the fare, or that he is not making the most strenuous efforts to obtain something better. He has no abstract *right*, however, to anything better. What he enjoys is in itself a boon and a blessing; and even the gratitude he feels and expresses excites him to new efforts. When Robinson Crusoe amused himself with his man Friday and his domestic pets, and thanked God for the comforts and indulgences he enjoyed, he was all the while employed anxiously in building a vessel, that he might escape from his solitary kingdom. The two occupations and two feelings were not inconsistent; but, on the contrary, intimately and necessarily associated. The bounties bestowed upon him in his forlorn and awful condition not only excited a feeling of religious gratitude, but, by the confidence they inspired in a guardian Providence, gave nerve to his arm and courage to his heart.

The word content, we have observed, occurs only once in Scripture; and there its use by the illustrious apostle, in his address to the Hebrews, exemplifies in a remarkable manner the meaning we desire to convey. While exhorting his brethren to be content with 'such things as they had,' he counsels no idle self-satisfaction, no folding of the hands, no standing still; but, on the contrary, urges them in the onward path of social and religious effort. Progress, indeed, is the grand principle, philosophically speaking, which distinguishes Christianity from other religions. Under other forms of faith there have no doubt been great and lofty spirits, which soared above the destinies of their age, and left monuments of their genius for the admiration of a remote posterity; but the new Message called in to the feast the lame and the blind, the lowest as well as the highest of society, and thus commenced what was more than chronologically a new era for mankind.

We are ourselves selfishly interested in demolishing the content of the poets and sentimentalists, since we have always advocated submission and thankfulness simultaneously with energy and movement. But we go farther, and assert that the two are not merely reconcilable with, but necessary to each other. The surly repining which it is the fashion of the day to consider as a requisite ingredient in progress, or rather as the spring

from which progress should take its rise, is an obstacle to every movement but that which is downwards. Grumbling is neither wholesome movement nor its precursor; for the very act of grumbling absorbs the energies which are requisite to carry a man beyond the condition of which he complains. There is nothing so easy as grumbling, and nothing more indicative of a dull and barren spirit. It is still worse than content; for while it prevents advancement, it neutralises even the tame enjoyment of immobility. Show us a town where the people are habitual grumblers, and have the ingenuity to pick a flaw in everything that is attempted to be done in the way of public improvement, and we will undertake to show you a crowd of do-nothings; so invariably is it the case that the growling faultfinder is practically a sluggard—a personage who, reposing in self-sufficient indolence, can put all the world right in theory, without having the sense to manage his own affairs.

If we descend from generals to particulars, from societies to individuals, we find illustrations of this doctrine in the scenes of everyday life. Let us suppose a hard-wrought artificer returning after a day's toil to his cheerless room, where he looks with disgust upon his coarse meal, and with a sombre sternness into the faces of his wife and children, in which he sees only the reflection of the gloom that overshadows his own. For this man there is no hope; for his mind is occupied in brooding over his condition, and has none of its energies to spare for plans of advancement. He is neither building his Crusoe vessel nor enjoying the society of his household pets; he sees no hopeful sail in the distance of ocean;

'And the rough billows wash away
The few strange footsteps on the shore!'

Let us now suppose the same individual returning to the same desolate scene, but which is lighted up by his presence as with a gleam of sunshine, for a happily-constituted mind illumines all within its sphere. His wife is poorly dressed; but what then?—cotton is as good a conductor of sympathy as satin. He sees in the rise of his growing children from their too scanty garments only matter for hope, and smiles as he thinks that there is progress in all things. His meal would be far from tempting to a dainty appetite; but he knows that there are some to whom it would be luxury, just as there are others whose fare would be luxury to him, and so he blesses God for His bounty. The room is small, but it holds goodly company; for that familiar book, or sheet, brings him into association with other minds, and sets flowing the thoughts of his own. He is cheerful, happy—but not contented! Oh no! There are better rooms, richer meals, more tasteful clothing, and a wider circle of intellectual association to be had in the world; and he knows that all these have been obtained by thousands around him who had no more vantage ground to start from than himself. He laughs at the idea of being contented as he is; but it is a proud and a merry, not a bitter laugh; and the thought thus conjured up acts as the leaven of his character, and helps to bring about what it foretells.

The author of the book, the dreamer of the floating sheet, obscure in himself, yet perhaps the conductor, if not the producer of that electric thought, is in precisely the same position as the mind he has thus assisted to illumine. One study brings on another, one step leads to a higher, till he is cut off from the living in the very middle of his career. And is there, then, no content? May we never hope to be at rest? He could tell if he

were permitted to return! In this life all is movement, but in the next we reach the goal of knowledge; and there Content—no longer an obstacle to progress, no longer an antagonism struggling against the higher destiny of man—changes its nature, and becomes universal and immortal.

L. R.

SQUATTERS AND GOLD-DIGGERS.

AN EMIGRANT'S EXPERIENCES.*

ON one of the days immediately following the Revolution of February 1848, I took breakfast for the last time at the Café de Paris, and in the evening found myself at Havre, where I had engaged my passage in the *Queen Victoria* for New Orleans. I went on board, and ere long, France presented itself to my eyes but as a blue cloud mingled with the haze on the distant horizon.

The impression of sad thoughts still remained, when, after a voyage of thirty-five days, we approached the mouth of the Mississippi. I then began to ask myself what resources I had brought to the country of my adoption. In the days of my prosperity, to benefit a friend, I had bought 500 acres of uncleared land in the state of Virginia; and now the clearing of this territory, with a quarter's income, 6000 francs, were the only resources left me by the Revolution.

On purchasing the land, proper attention had been paid to the necessary legal formalities to secure undisputed possession: it was situated on an affluent of the Ohio, up which river, according to the itinerary traced out for me, I was to proceed by steamboat as far as the village of Guyandot. After landing at New Orleans, I started on this second voyage by one of the 500 huge steamers which plough the Mississippi and western rivers. Among the passengers was one who seemed to share my disposition for nocturnal reveries: he never left the deck. After a time, I questioned him: he proved to be a fellow-countryman, who, like myself, had left France on account of the Revolution. We gave confidence for confidence, and he commended my expatriation as the only wise course. For his part he had been a literary aspirant, and landed in New Orleans with thirty francs and a romance in manuscript. He succeeded in disposing of the latter to a publisher, and with part of the proceeds bought ten acres of land somewhere in the interior; and having provided himself with an axe and a rifle, took a deck passage on board our vessel. I could not help admiring the philosophy with which he contemplated his prospects. His whole capital was twenty-five dollars. 'With five of these,' he said, 'I can buy enough of potatoes and salt beef to last me a year; and I shall be very unfortunate indeed if this sailor's fare cannot be mended from time to time with a quarter of a deer. I shall then have twenty dollars; half of them will go for a log-house, and the rest will suffice for seed for the land to be cleared by my axe. One grain of Indian corn will produce an ear; and with the produce of one acre I will buy ten others, and so continue adding to the extent of my possessions, until my pride of ownership being satisfied, it shall please me to lay down my axe and say—It is enough.' In this country such projects are not dreams.

A few hours elapsed, when the steamer slackened its speed: my companion was about to bid adieu for a long time to civilised life. The situation was one of the wildest on the banks of the Ohio. A solitary house, half hidden by trees, stood on the shore; a skiff put off rowed by a fisherman; the scanty baggage was dropped into it, and followed by my adventurous friend. We again went on, but I had time to see the new emigrant step on shore, pass his arms into the straps of his knapsack, and then, with axe and rifle on shoulder, disappear behind a screen of gigantic trees.

The next day we reached Guyandot, and it was then my turn to leave the steamer; and the recollection of

the indifference with which my compatriot had plunged into the forest the day before, relieved me of certain anxious forebodings as to the fatigues and dangers of an emigrant's life; and I walked at once to the inn to make inquiries. Half-a-dozen huge men were drinking in the bar-room; and though myself not of the shortest, I felt humiliated in comparing my stature with theirs. They paid no attention to my entrance, but shortly afterwards, while I was endeavouring, in imperfect English, to extract information from the landlord, they became silent and listened. The innkeeper seemed embarrassed, and hesitated to explain. Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder, which almost threw me off my balance; and I fancied some aggression on the part of one of the giants; but a smile almost of benevolence on the Virginian's large features reassured me.

'I can tell the gentleman,' he said, turning to the landlord; 'the name of the section he asks for is Redmapple.'

'Ah!' answered the host, apparently astonished.

'Are you certain of what you say?' I demanded in turn.

'To be sure,' replied the Virginian with an ironical air; and on my expression of desire for speedy possession, he continued, 'Don't be impatient; you'll get there soon enough;' and then, without noticing me further, he swallowed a glass of whisky.

Presently another stranger entered the room: he was tall and strong as the others, and wore a hunting-suit, with thick leathern gaiters; one hand held a whip, the other a rifle. He called for a glass of spirits, and demanded the news from Cincinnati. The man who had accosted me replied to the inquiry; and then pointing me out, said, 'That's the owner of Redmapple.'

The new-comer shivered with excitement. 'Ah,' he growled, measuring me with an eye of concentrated spite, and stretching out his brawny arms, 'the white and weak hands of gentlemen make but poor work with the axe and rifle. Take my advice, and go back where you came from—New York, I guess?'

'And why, if you please?' I asked.

'For reasons which it is useless to tell,' was the answer; and with American urbanity my interlocutor began to whistle *Yankee-doodle*.

I was annoyed and embarrassed at this conversation: what could it mean? Just then a youth came to the door and cried, 'Township, somebody wants you.' This was the name of my incomprehensible adviser, who rose and went out. I again applied to the landlord, but with no better success than before, except being informed that my section lay some seventy miles from Guyandot, and could be reached in a two-days' journey. I went out in search of a horse, when the youth before-mentioned came up and said, 'If you want to go to Redmapple, I can get you a boat to go up the Guyandot, or a horse to go by land.'

'And who told you that I wish to go to Redmapple?'

'Township.'

I chose the horse; and before daybreak the next morning we were on the route which skirted the course of the river. As we went deeper into the forest, traces of cultivation became more and more rare, and the rude track presented a constantly-varying succession of difficulties. The sun was sinking as we came near to a farm, and we were about to diverge towards it, when the noise of a horse's gallop rang through the wood. I turned my head, and recognised Township. He gave me a menacing look while he reined up his horse, and spoke a few words in an undertone to my guide; after which he rode on as fast as before. I endeavoured to find out the cause of this demeanour by questioning the youth, but received none but vague replies. We passed the night at the farm; and on the following day, after a ride of some hours, came to the top of a range of hills, where my guide stopped abruptly.

'You see,' he said, 'that brook running past at your feet—that blue hill yonder in front—that big pond at your right—and that line of trees on your left'—

* Freely translated and adapted from the 'Revue des Deux Mondes.'

'Well?'

'Well!' he rejoined, 'you see Redmaple: those trees, these hills, that pond, are the bounds of your location.'

I was in raptures at the sight of so magnificent an estate. James—that was the youth's name—smiled ironically, and to my surprise urged me to retrace my steps. Again I was puzzled; and all the explanation I could obtain led me to expect that my claim to possession would be disputed. 'At all events,' said the astute urchin, on taking his departure, 'if the squatter asks to see your title, say you left it at the attorney's: that will be the safest.' and setting spurs to his horse, he was soon out of sight.

Left alone, I deliberated: then taking out my telescope, I leant against the stem of an oak, and surveyed my domain. The valley of Redmaple, lighted by the setting sun, lay before me in all its splendour: everything was in harmony, and it might have been taken for a vision of Eden. A distant column of light smoke revealed the site of Township's habitation; and turning my telescope in that direction, I saw two sturdy boys wrestling among the fallen logs scattered over a portion of prairie ground; while beyond them a young and graceful girl was slowly walking near a clump of tulip-trees, and gathering wild flowers, which she interwove with her hair. The sun went down as I gazed, and speedily the brightness of the scene was veiled in one uniform tint: the time to act had come; so, commending my cause to Providence, I hastened down the slope to a gloomy avenue leading through the wood. My rifle was in excellent order, and I advanced with the caution of a suspicious poacher rather than as proprietor of the soil. I took every stump that rose in the gloom for the squatter: at last I could mistake no longer; he stood leaning on his rifle at the entrance of an opening in the forest. I was about thirty paces off when he motioned me to halt, and exclaimed in a voice of thunder—'I have been waiting for you: what do you want with me?'

'If you have been waiting for me,' I answered, 'you know who I am, and what I want. I am told that you have settled yourself in this land, which belongs to me, and call upon you in the name of the law to give me free possession; and forgetting my guide's advice, I drew from my pocket the papers which certified my exclusive title.'

'Redmaple shall have but one owner as long as I live,' replied Township. 'I could have killed you like a deer at any moment during the last hour; but I wish to avoid bloodshed between us. Go back: there is yet time; my right is that of first occupant, and your title is nothing in my eyes.'

Either to frighten me, or with a real intention to fire, the squatter raised his rifle, and aimed. I stood motionless.

'The nearest sheriff,' he continued, 'is seventy miles away; the report of my rifle will never reach his ears; your corpse will have been devoured by the birds, and your papers blown away like dead leaves, before any one thinks of inquiring about you. One, two!—'

I heard the click of the lock, but some irresistible force impelled me onwards; and with my rifle resting peacefully on my shoulder, I approached my opponent, preferring any danger to a retreat.

'Three!' cried Township. It is not easy to describe what followed. Scarcely had he pronounced the word, than a man rushed from a neighbouring thicket, and seizing me with vigorous arms, snatched my papers. It was one of the squatter's sons. Then there was a flash, a loud report, and a ball whistled between our two heads, brought near together in the heat of the struggle. We both fell, each thinking that the other was wounded. Township uttered a cry of horror, and rushed towards us, his look of terror disappearing as he saw that his son was safe. On my part I rose furious with rage, and reproached him loudly for his cowardice.

'Cowardice!' he retorted with a savage laugh. Then reloading his weapon, he returned to me my rifle and

papers, declaring that he scorned to take advantage of me, but that we must fight for possession of the valley; and the only way to settle the question would be rifle to rifle, showing no quarter.

The quarrel was about to recommence, when we were interrupted by the arrival of the two boys whom I had seen wrestling. They looked at me with pity, as a doomed man; and one of them proposed deferring the execution to the next day, as the increasing darkness made it difficult to distinguish objects.

The proposition was acceded to, and I was invited to pass the night in the squatter's hut. But the eldest son—he who had seized my papers—replied that I preferred to camp under a tree, and in a whisper bade me await his return. At the end of an hour he reappeared with a lantern and basket of provisions; and while I did honour to the corn-cakes, salt beef, and beer, he informed me, under some excitement, that a farmer, one of their neighbours, had just been telling them of a distant country where gold was as plenty as stones. Whole caravans of emigrants were on their way thither, and my terrible enemy Township was now reading the accounts in the papers. I paid but little attention; and having made up a bed of dry moss, stretched myself upon it, while my companion, who intended to keep watch, recommended me to go to sleep. This apparent sympathy was singular; but to avoid useless discussion, I feigned obedience: but sleep was far from visiting my eyes. The thought that this might be my last night of life tortured me. At last a sort of torpor stole over me, from which I was roused by the sound of voices. I started up, and saw a fair and slender form disappearing among the trees. 'Tis only my sister,' said the young man, 'pretending she wanted to speak to me, when it was only curiosity. And, to say truth, she looked at you by lantern light, and thinks you are over-young to die.'

Day had scarcely broke, when we saw Township, accompanied by a stranger and his two sons, coming towards us. The unknown held out his hand to me, observing that he was acquainted with the whole affair, and that all might be easily arranged on certain conditions. Redmaple would be given up to me if I consented to retract a certain offensive expression which had escaped me the night before, and to pay for the log-house and the labour bestowed on the land. So unexpected a change of circumstances seemed to me like escaping from a troubled dream. I closed with the terms, and followed the party to the dwelling, where the mystery was explained by the squatter's pointing to his wagons in course of loading, and lying open on the table, 'Manual for Emigrants to California.' Prompted by the love of adventure natural to his class, he was ready to go forth and encounter new fatigues, being further stimulated by an access of what the Americans call 'the metallic yellow fever.'

Judging from appearances, Township's wife and daughter regarded this sudden removal with secret misgivings: they sat apart in melancholy reverie, forming a pleasing group amid their rude companions, who were impatient to depart. A few hours later, I was alone in the house so late the scene of activity. Now that I was in possession, I felt indifferent; and I hardly liked to confess that my thoughts had taken a turn. At the moment of departure the young girl had spoken a few words of farewell, which lingered painfully in my heart; and as the wagon on which she was seated moved away, she had plucked a branch of maple flowers, one of which fell from her hand to the ground. Was this an adieu—a *souvenir*? This, and other thoughts, agitated me as I walked restlessly hither and thither for the remainder of the day. Night came; I shut myself up in the hut. The newspapers that had turned Township's brain, and doubtless saved my life, were yet lying on the table; I devoured the contents, but they failed to divert my thoughts. Thus several days passed, and the solitude at last became insupportable. I remembered that Township's neighbour had invited me to

see him, and offered, in case of my having to leave Redmapple at any time, to protect it against a new usurper. His farm was some miles distant from mine: I started at once, but could not help looking back sadly at my solitary habitation, as though bidding it a final adieu.

A few days' residence with my new friend gave a new direction to my thoughts: why should I not see a little of adventure before sitting down quietly to my new vocation? Two resources were open before me: one, to hire men, and proceed immediately to clear and cultivate my land; the other, to follow the squatter to California. In either case a journey to Guyandot would be necessary, for there only could labour be hired or information obtained of the gold country. I took leave of my host, and travelled to the little town where I had not long before disembarked, and where I soon found that hiring labour was out of the question. The rudest labourer, allured by the flaming handbills, 'CALIFORNIA AND GOLD-FINDERS,' posted everywhere, preferred the prospect of distant gain to offers of employment at home. I was walking about, listening to the various groups, when the touch of a hand brought me to a halt. My countryman, with whom I had parted on the steamer, saluted me; and without waiting to be questioned, 'I have had nothing but ill-luck in this miserable country,' he said. 'Instead of ten acres of good land, it soon appeared that I had only bought a splendid turf-bog on the banks of the Ohio, and shut in by an impenetrable forest. I declined pitching my tent in so dull a place; and since the Pactolus flows decidedly in California, it is there that I mean to try my fortune once more with the remains of my modest savings.'

My resolution was taken: we went on board a steamboat, and in a few days were in St Louis, the starting-point for the El Dorado. Here a multitudinous caravan of emigrants were making their preparations. My companion went to work with spirit, and soon we were in possession of a covered wagon, two mules, two horses, salted meats, bear-skins and coverlets, and an intelligent and trustworthy servant. While waiting the departure, I searched diligently for the squatter and his family. But no one had seen them; all I could learn was, that two or three wagons had started as pioneers towards Santa Fé about three days previously. The thought that Township's daring might have led him to undertake this dangerous service made me the more impatient to follow.

At length our turn came; and the long file of wagons, animals, men, women, and children, moved slowly out of St Louis, a scene of picturesque confusion. When we halted for the night, the horizon was bounded on every side by the broad undulations of the prairies. Difficulties and dangers were to be encountered: rivers forded, gullies to be passed, and arid wastes of sand to be traversed. In due time we reached the country of the Camanches Indians, when the precautions taken for security on camping at night were redoubled. Among the scouts was a Canadian, who went by the name of Everquiet: he was a fine specimen of his class, and had passed his life in going and returning between Santa Fé and St Louis. I made his acquaintance, and one morning, riding by his side, heard him remark on the appearance of wheel-tracks in the ground before us, and he feared for the safety of the travellers. I at once concluded that the adventurous party must be that of Township; and a day or two afterwards, my convictions were confirmed. Rain had fallen; and Everquiet pointed out to me, on a deserted camping ground, the impressions of feet, among which were some that could only have been made by a young girl. The number of the party was made out exactly; and day after day the scout informed me of their proceedings as clearly as though he saw it all written in a book. Hitherto all had gone well; but now the hunter shook his head: Indians and Mexican robbers had visited the camp, but with what result did not appear. I became alarmed, and after much persuasion, induced Everquiet

to consent to ride forward with me and my companion to overtake, and, if need were, succour the adventurers. They were calculated to be forty miles in advance; and we proposed to rejoin the caravan after an absence of two or three days. We rode off in the night, and at day-break reached the banks of the Arkansas river. Here our scout's attention was diverted from the main object by a fight between a bear and a buffalo, in which his passion for the chase led him to interfere. He galloped off after the bear, and we could do nothing but follow. The animal made its way rapidly along the banks of the stream, and presently, when opposite a floating tree, seemed to take great interest in its navigation, stretching out one paw and then the other to guide it. The action was inexplicable: all at once Everquiet seized me by the arm as he exclaimed, 'There's a man on the tree!'

There was indeed a human being bound to the trunk, floating and whirling in the furious rapids of the river; and I bewildered myself in imagining the implacable hatred that could thus renew the frightful punishment of Mazeppa. The bear, however, had succeeded in seizing a branch; and his savage howlings, as he drew the tree to the shore, warned us that no time was to be lost. We both fired at once, and the animal, rolling over, disappeared in the foaming waters. We hastened to succour the unfortunate wretch to whose aid we seemed so providentially to have arrived; but although we could release him from his lashings, we could not restore the lost existence. We deposited the body in a cleft of the rocky shore, and hastened onwards to retrieve the delay.

After several hours' farther riding, we reached the only ford of the Arkansas that could have been crossed by the squatter's wagons. Here, among the intermingled tracks of men and horses, Everquiet discovered those of a corps of riflemen, which, to all appearance, had joined the party as escort through the dangerous country; there was therefore no remaining ground of alarm. Much relieved by this assurance, we rode back to the caravan, which we reached just as they were encamping for the night. A crowd was collected round a man who sat pale and shivering by one of the fires. To our great surprise we recognised the individual whom we had left for dead on the banks of the Arkansas. His countenance was the reverse of prepossessing: it displayed that mixture of craft and ferocity which essentially characterises the degraded class of Mexican population. In reply to our inquiries, he explained that the frightful position from which we had extricated him was the effect of his having been seized as a spy by a party of Indians. Although not very trustworthy, we feigned to believe this report. The next day our weary march was resumed; and without further incident, we arrived, after three months of travel, on the soil of California.

We were the first to explore the gold country from the interior, all previous parties having ascended from the western coast. The tumult occasioned by the halt and encampment of more than three hundred adventurers, who had encountered so much peril and fatigue in search of fortune, may well be imagined. Everquiet agreed to join my party; so, with my countryman—once a novel-writer—and my servant, we set up our tent, and deliberated on future proceedings. Our first night was not passed without alarm: a party of mounted Indians, prowling in the neighbourhood, had been seen by the sentinel, the report of whose rifle, repeated by the echoes, sounded like a fusillade; and some time was passed in scouting before we were again tranquil—as though to give us an immediate taste of the contingencies of gold-digging. The next day, according to agreement, Everquiet and I went out to look for the squatter, leaving the novel-writer and our servant in charge of the tent. While the hunter took one direction, I followed another through a rocky gorge, but both terminating on the shores of a lake visible from our encampment. I was seeking for the traces of wheels

on the stony path, when a morsel of rock fell at my feet. I looked up: there sat the Mexican vagabond, as he seemed, his legs hanging over the cliff, and a rifle on his knees, about fifty feet above my head. He beckoned me to join him, and I climbed up, hoping to get a better view from the elevation. 'There is danger in being alone,' he said when I was at his side. 'Suppose that, instead of having just come, your belt was full of gold dust, would you not do wrong to expose yourself among desert rocks?'

I assented, but replied that my poverty protected me, and my companion was not far off.

'True: the Canadian hunter, a man moulded to prairie life. He at least seeks but game; unlike those greedy Americans who pour down on our beautiful California as a flock of vultures;' and as he spoke, the Mexican pointed to our camp, which appeared unusually excited.

'How many delusions there are among them,' he continued; 'and how many perhaps will regret what they have left!'

'What do you mean?' I inquired. 'Is not the gold so abundant as was said, or is it very difficult to find?'

'The trade of gold-seeker,' answered the Mexican with an equivocal smile, 'is accompanied by unknown perils. And, besides, the mental excitement, the fatigue of the body, the exhalations from the streams turned out of their course, the vapours from the excavated soil, hunger and thirst, do you count all that for nothing? Take my advice; let the fools rush over the ground as though every pebble, every grain of sand, hid a piece of gold. Before many days, there will be rare carnage here for the vultures.'

'But at least,' I rejoined, 'what has been said about the hidden riches of these countries is not a lie?'

'Listen,' answered the Mexican: 'I owe some gratitude to you, and your friend, and the hunter; and to prove that I am not ungrateful, I am going to reveal what a true gold-seeker cannot be ignorant of without disgrace. There are a thousand ways of seeking gold without speaking of my method; and, for the moment, I am not in question. What I tell you was known perfectly well to every Californian long before the arrival of these foreign gold-seekers. My youth was passed in searching for gold in this country, and I can speak from experience. Avoid the courses of streams; they have been flowing for ages in the same direction, and have worn away all that they are likely to separate from the veins, and the grains rolling in the sand are not worth the fevers and rheumatisms which their waters will generate. Choose rather the dry bed of a torrent; there it is another matter. In the impetuosity of their capricious course, they drag more gold from the rocky veins in a single season than a brook in a hundred years. Explore the channel upwards, for the largest pieces of gold are the least remote from the mother-vein. Examine carefully the *pepitas* that you find: the sharper their angles, the less have they rolled, and the nearer are they to their native rock. Then, if you discover grains of gold still adhering to their stony envelop, dig, search everywhere, break the rocks, do everything, for you are close to a vein that will well repay the fatigue and the risk.'

This reasoning appeared to me incontestable. 'Why, then,' I asked, 'do you renounce a trade whose secrets you know so well?'

'I have already told you that there are many ways of gold-seeking; so enough on that subject. Farewell, senior! If you will take my word, you will be careful not to trust yourself far from the camp alone, and without arms. Now that I have given you good counsel and information, I am quits with you, and shall go about my own affairs. It is for you to profit by my experience, unless you prefer, like the greater part of your companions, to brave rather than to avoid dangers: you are your own master.'

The Mexican rose while speaking, and with an air of mockery descended the steep with hasty strides. He

was soon out of sight: I followed the route to the lake, where two wagons on the shore showed that a party had already taken possession. They attracted my attention; and on coming nearer, my suspicion was changed to certainty. Township's three sons were busy digging and washing the sand. One was screening the coarser particles on a hurdle, and close by lay large heaps finely sifted. Terry, the eldest, came forward to greet me and conduct me to his father's camp, which was in a little valley between the heights bordering the lake. I was received as an old acquaintance, and the young girl acknowledged my salute by one of those gracious smiles of which I had so often thought with emotion on our long pilgrimage.

I need not enter into details on the explanations and conference that followed. However, on relating the incident of the rescue of the Mexican on the floating tree, I could not help noticing that all the family seemed embarrassed, and Township visibly agitated. Suffice it, that my party was admitted to increase and strengthen the encampment, and prepare for additional labours.

On returning to the camp, I found that our servant was absent without leave—gone to seek gold on his own account; and the whole colony was in a similar state of disorder—the first symptoms of the prevalent malady. No more servitude; all were masters, and had gone in search of *placers* (gold-grounds). While I was contemplating this novel state of things, the novel-writer returned.

'Ah, ah!' he exclaimed on coming up; 'no bogs here, even when you look for them. Nothing but sandy plains; that's clear.'

'And is that all you have discovered?'

'Is not that already something, for I have a horror of bogs; and then sand indicates the presence of gold, as I know, for I have just bought a placer for hard cash down.'

'What!' I said; 'buy a placer here in California? You are joking.'

Just then Everquiet returned; and yielding to my friend's importunities, we packed our gear in the wagons to go, as he said, and encamp upon gold. As we went on he explained the circumstances of the purchase. In his ramble he had seen two men seated in a sandy plain, each provided with a bowl, which they filled with sand, and washed in an adjoining brook. Their exclamations of joy were frequent as they turned up the golden grains, and they lamented that pressing business called them away from so valuable a spot. The novel-writer approached just as one of the two had picked up a lump of gold the size of an almond; and unable to contain himself, offered to purchase the ground for ten dollars. Difficulties were started, but eventually overcome; and at length the exchange was made of a placer worth a million for the ten silver coins.

I need hardly state that our utmost exertions with pickaxe and shovel, continued during two days, failed to bring to light the slightest particle of gold: my companion had no better luck here than in his purchase of turf-bog on the shores of the Ohio. Nothing, however, could disturb the novel-writer's good-humour, notwithstanding his having been the dupe of a crafty rogue. On the third day we made our way to Township's encampment, as agreed; but everything was changed on the borders of the lake. A village, built with stakes and branches, stood where shortly before all was a desert, while a crowd of labourers were moving about with noisy activity, and the restless and enterprising genius of America had already invented means of research more effectual than those heretofore employed. Every visage was radiant, for the indefatigable toil was beginning to produce fruits: boisterous bursts of joy mingled with frantic thanksgivings; grains of gold, sometimes almost impalpable, were exhibited with triumph, but to obtain which a mountain of sand had been removed. Here and there adventurers more fortunate found little *pepitas*, which, magnified by rumour, have become gigantic in Europe. Yet with all this

apparent prosperity, vague reports were in circulation; suspicious characters had been seen lurking about by the hunters and woodcutters, and severe toil and insufficient nutriment were manifesting their effects.

Our own party worked well; and when assembled under the tents at night, the presence of females was found to afford a solace for the fatigues of the day: all were striving for the common good. But in the camp at large scarce a night passed without a surprise: tents and wagons were pillaged; crime and misery began their reign. It was only foreigners who were assassinated; individuals of Californian origin seemed to bear a charmed life. One day that the novel-writer and I had made a satisfactory discovery in a dry gully, we could not help talking gloomily over a state of things which had changed the severity and robust manliness of the Anglo-Saxon character into a brutal corruption, where Mexican vices flourished in unveiled deformity. The same evening one of the hardiest of the emigrants was brought in a corpse, shot dead by a bullet from some unknown hand. But suspicion pointed to the Mexican prowler whom we had, perhaps to our cost, saved from drowning or worse. Township broke out in a furious malediction: passion was doing its work.

A month passed; the miseries of the situation were complicated; and one-half of the emigrants were compelled to keep watch with arms in their hands while the other half worked. I passed most of my time with rifle on shoulder as sentinel to our encampment, while Everquiet and the novel-writer went in pursuit of game, and Township and his family searched for gold with steady perseverance. The Indians were becoming daily more daring in their attacks, and I hoped that Township would consent to depart from a place where no man could count on an hour's existence. For some time I had observed that Terry was growing impatient of his father's severe authority; I was keeping guard as usual, when one evening I saw him returning with empty hands. I spoke to him, but he replied only in impatient monosyllables; but afterwards declared he was weary of the frightful occupation, and would soon seek out a better mode of living for himself, as his father had done before him.

I pacified him as well as the circumstances would permit, and leaving him to take my post, walked down to the village in search of my friend and the hunter. I entered the tavern, which presented a scene worthy of Pandemonium, and where a glass of brandy sold for the price of a barrel. Presently I was summoned away by Township's youngest son, who, scarcely able to speak for terror, told me that some misfortune was about to happen at the tent. I rushed out, and when near the camp, heard the report of a rifle. 'He has killed him!' shrieked the boy, rushing forwards in dismay. At that moment Terry ran hurriedly from the tent, directing his steps towards the mountains rather than to the lake. At so late an hour, this was hastening to his destruction. I called after him in vain; he continued his flight. On entering the tent, I found Township leaning on his still smoking rifle, and the whole family in distress. One of the boys acquainted me with what had happened:—Angered by a remonstrance from his eldest son, the squatter, in one of his uncontrollable bursts of passion, had fired at him. The daughter had diverted the aim; and the young man, bidding his parent a solemn farewell, left the tent never to return. We looked from one to the other in silence, when at length a noise in the camp aroused Township from his stupor: his parental feelings had regained the ascendancy. 'Let us go,' he said, addressing me; 'let us go; in a few minutes it will perhaps be too late; and without waiting for a reply, he hastened out. I snatched a rifle, and ran after him. I was uneasy, not only on Terry's account, but also for the novel-writer and Everquiet, who had not returned as usual from the chase. We hurried over the ground, and in a few minutes reached the rocky defiles of the Sierra.

American hunters generally agree on certain signals—

either the note of a bird, or the howl of an animal—to be employed at night, or when on the scout: ours was that used by Everquiet—the howl of a wolf. Three howls, uttered at short and equal intervals, denoted the presence of one or other of our number. Township gave the preconcerted signal, once, twice; but no answer. The third attempt produced a reply. We bent our steps in the direction of the sound, and as we made our way among the wild crags and gaping crevices, I felt my courage half failing me: each rock might conceal an enemy. To add to our embarrassment, the signals were repeated in different directions, till at last we were uncertain which to follow. While we stood hesitating, a loud explosion was heard, followed by two plaintive howls; we listened for the third, but all was still. Township's breath came short and thick as we resumed our search: again he tried the signal; it was answered, and two men climbed towards us along a hollow path. They were the novel-writer and Everquiet; they were returning to the camp, and had seen nothing of Terry. We persuaded them to join us; the hunter led the way, stopping frequently to inspect the soil. Presently we came to footmarks, which he pronounced to be those of Indian and Mexican marauders. His remarks were interrupted by a mournful note, resembling the chant of the whip-poor-will, breaking the silence of the night. It had a strange effect on Township, for he sank down and buried his face in his hands, seeming overcome with grief. He replied to the voice in a broken tone, and listened as though his life or death depended on what would follow.

'It is some family signal,' whispered Everquiet; 'the squatter has recognised the voice of his son:' which assertion was verified by an answering cry, but so feeble, as scarcely to be heard above the sweep of the breeze.

'It is he—it is Terry!' cried Township, rushing towards the spot whence the sound proceeded. We followed; the unhappy young man lay stretched motionless and senseless on the ground. The father's heart was bursting with grief as he knelt by the side of his boy, and questioned him as to the author of the accident. Life seemed to return for a few seconds as the young man spoke; but I heard no more than the words—'The night on the Arkansas!' It was the expiring effort; and Township's arms embraced a corpse.

The squatter was not a man to shed useless tears, now that he knew the name of the murderer, and could hope to gratify his vengeance. We made a litter with our rifles, and bore the body to the camp, while Everquiet, in spite of our dissuases, persisted in following a suspicious trail that led farther into the hills, and promised to rejoin us at the tents. On returning to the lake, we forbore to intrude on the grief of Township's family, and patrolled up and down, for the camp was still in alarm. The excitement was afterwards heightened by an unexpected arrival: Everquiet came in with the Mexican bound to the back of his own horse by his own lasso.

'You will not bewilder honest people any more with your false signals,' said the hunter, addressing his captive. 'But have a little patience, gold-seeking is weary work; you will soon be relieved of your troubles.'

'Do you take me for a common gold-seeker?' retorted the Mexican haughtily. 'Bah! I do not dig in the sand; instead of searching a placer, I search the gold-seekers themselves. It is a trade as well as another!'

Everquiet made no reply to this sally: he advanced towards Township's encampment, asking me as we walked along if I wished to witness for once in my life a specimen of Lynch law.

I declined being a spectator of the squatter's vengeance, and, sick at heart, withdrew to my tent. I wished to escape from scenes where greed, brutality, and effrontery—the vices of civilisation and those of barbarism—jostled in frightful contrast. Yet before falling asleep, I heard a cry of agony repeated by all the echoes of the valley; and I learnt from my companion, who entered

soon afterwards, that the Mexican had been hurled into the lake under the eyes of the inflexible squatter. Lynch justice was satisfied.

On the morrow I experienced a feeling of disgust and inquietude, from which the only escape is resuming the pilgrim staff, and striking the tent. Everquiet alone comprehended my condition. The novel-writer had not yet lost all faith in his star, and could not, without self-reproach, quit so suddenly a land in which he might become a millionaire. Township, too, plunged in melancholy sadness, had no thought of leaving the spot where the remains of his unfortunate son reposed. I bade adieu to a family among whom I once thought my existence would be fixed, and pressed the hand of my compatriot, who, in the gloomy Californian valley, preserved the same good-humour as on the verdant banks of the Ohio. I departed in company with Everquiet, and a few days afterwards, left San Francisco for New York.

My arrival in the Hudson river was most opportune for a poor Alsatian family just landed, who had come to America to place their docile and patient industry at the service of any enterprising settler. I returned to Redmaple with these intelligent and laborious emigrants, and was soon able to compare, without a shadow of regret, the life of a cultivator to that of gold-seeker; and now I begin to relish toils which possess a certain grandeur as well as utility. The struggle with untamed nature, and the culture of a soil reclaimed by persevering efforts, will long be the object to attract and unite the common labours of those who seek the solitudes of the New World. Yet in America there are many whom such a life will not suffice. Everquiet resisted all my intreaties to abide with me on my lands; he requires the excitement of a long and perilous chase, a wandering without end and without object across the boundless prairies. The novel-writer sends me word that he has enriched himself from a lucky vein, and thinks of returning to France. This intention surprises and pains me; in him I lose a friend, whose energy of character and gaiety of spirit endeared him to me; and I fear that, in the tame and trifling pastimes of our cities, he will often regret too late the expansive and quiet life which America never refuses to the emigrant who bases his labours on a small capital. With regard to Township, on the word of his friend the farmer, he will grow tired of digging the sands of California, and be tempted to come and clear one of these Virginian woods which possess in his eyes the charm of a native country. The day perhaps is not far off which will see him begin the second period of a squatter's destiny, when, in place of adventures and illegal clearings, he will enjoy the benefits of legitimate possession, the stability of domestic life, and possibly even the honours of Congress.

BRITISH WEASEL FAMILY.

THE animals of this tribe are the most bloodthirsty of all the carnivora, and, on account of the length of their bodies, and the shortness of their limbs, as well as of their power of winding and insinuating themselves through the smallest openings, are also termed *vermiform*. They are all *semi-plantigrade*, and lead us through the badger to the true plantigrades or bear family.

We place the otter (*Lutra vulgaris*) first, on account of its being the only aquatic member of the family—or, to speak more correctly, the only amphibious one—from the remainder of which it is distinguished by its webbed toes and horizontally-flattened tail. It possesses the power of remaining under water for a considerable time, and of catching fish with the greatest facility: in order to obtain which, it makes its home by some quiet river-side, in the natural excavations formed by the gnarled roots of the overhanging trees, and the ceaseless flow of the waters. It is highly probable that the otter may enlarge or otherwise adapt these hollows to his own

purposes, but there does not appear to be any good evidence for the assertion that he prepares a burrow for himself. In consequence of his shy and retired habits, the otter is rarely seen (in the southern parts of this island), save by those whose pursuits, whether of business or recreation, take them to the river's brink at all hours of the day: such may see him demurely sitting, with his broad, flat head, and brilliant, eel-like eyes, just peeping out of the hole where he has made his nest; or diving, intent on prey, and bringing up a glistening fish, which he draws to the shore, and then eats, commencing at the head; as soon as half the body is consumed, leaving the remainder, as if in mockery of the enraged fisherman who may chance to pass; and taking to the water, brings up another, and yet another; for his appetite for fish seems almost unlimited. And when his extravagant expenditure renders fish scarce, he marches off to considerable distances, for the purpose of procuring poultry, and even young lambs or sucking-pigs. Darwin says that he has frequently seen the otter dive and catch a fish, then let it go, catch it again, and so on, for some minutes, in the manner of a cat tormenting a mouse. It has been observed that the otter, when in pursuit of its prey, swims against the stream, which will account for the fact of the opening of the ears being placed backwards: a peculiarity usually only observed in those animals whose timid natures proclaim them as a tribe formed for flight; for though otter-hunts rank high among the lovers of the sport, yet they do not partake of the nature of hunts in which there is an open run across the country.

The otter is a most careful parent, and takes great pains to procure a safe retreat for her young. Some years ago a pair of these animals made their nest in the trunk of an old pollard, on the banks of the Thames, near Goring. The tree was hollow throughout, so that the young were laid on the ground, while the old ones crept in and out through one of the larger roots, which was also hollow: but, alas! the poor little things were discovered even in this secure retreat, and taken away. Several very interesting anecdotes are told, not merely of the affection of the female otter for her young, but also of the intelligence which she displays in guiding them. A correspondent of the 'Zoologist' mentions one which gave birth to two young ones in the gardens of the Zoological Society. On one occasion, when the water had been let out of the pond for the purpose of cleansing it, the little ones got into it before it was half-filled, and were unable to get out again. The mother, after making ineffectual attempts to reach them from the bank, plunged into the water, and began to play with one of them, and putting her head close to its ears, seemed as if trying to convey her meaning to it, and finally made a spring out of the pond, with the young one hanging on to the fur of her tail by its teeth. Having safely landed it, she got the other out in the same manner. This she did several times during a quarter of an hour; for as fast as she rescued one, the other leapt back into the water. Every one knows the impossibility of getting two children into the house, when they, with childhood's tact, see that you are not disinclined for a game of romps—for as soon as you, breathless with laughing, succeed in catching one, the other has escaped; but we should scarcely have suspected young otters of such gambols. At length, however, the mother considered that they had had play enough; and so, as soon as there was sufficient water for her to reach them from the side of the pond, she caught them by the ears, drew them out, led them round the pond close to the fence, and kept chattering to them, as if she were telling them not to go into the pond again.

Mr St John tells that he saw an otter catch a fish and lay it before her two cubs, who commenced a fierce struggle to obtain it; on perceiving which, the mother left the water, and separating them with her paws, placed the fish before one of the disputers, and then plunged again into the water. The other, who seems to

have been well-trained, did not attempt to touch the now-prohibited fish, but patiently waited until the mother, reappearing, laid a similar dainty before him.

In fact the otter is remarkably docile, and may be very easily tamed, and rendered useful in catching fish, as well as interesting and faithful as a pet: it will answer readily to its name, and make itself quite at home amongst its master's dogs. One which had been tamed by a man named Collins, and which returned at his call, was one day taken out by his son, and refusing to return at the accustomed sound, was lost. After an ineffectual search, the old man, passing by chance the place where it had been liberated, repeated its name aloud, when, to his inexpressible joy, it came creeping to his feet, and showing every mark of affection and penitence. Another, which was tamed in Scotland, would run to its master for protection when it saw any strange dogs, and endeavour to get into his arms. It would frequently take eight or ten pounds of fish in the day, and would fish either in river or sea. The otter will not eat fish or flesh unless it is perfectly fresh, and when in confinement, is usually fed on milk and hasty-pudding. The young otter is stated by Bewick to be good for food, and to be scarcely distinguishable from lamb. The skin of the otter is much valued in many countries, more especially in the north of Europe. It is covered with two kinds of fur, the shorter being very soft and fine in its texture, and the longer coarse and shining. An old otter frequently attains a great size, and it is probably to such that Southey alludes in his celebrated chapter of Kings. 'There are,' he says, 'kings among the otters in the Highland waters, and also among their relations the sea otters. The royal otter is larger than his subjects, and has a white spot upon his breast. He shuns observation, which it is sometimes provident for kings to do, especially under such circumstances as his, for his skin is in great request among soldiers and sailors. It is supposed to insure victory, to secure the wearer from being wounded, to be a sure prophylactic in times of contagious sickness, and a preservative in shipwreck. But it is not easy to find an otter king, and when found, there is danger in the act of regicide, for he bears a charmed life. The moment in which he is killed proves fatal to some other creature, either man or beast, whose mortal existence is mysteriously linked with his. The nature of the otter monarchy has not been described; it is evident, however, that his ministers have no leaves to dispose of; but then they have plenty of fishes.'

The weasel and stoat are perhaps the most characteristic example of the tribe, on account of their blood-thirsty habits and the determined boldness which they display in obtaining their prey. Very singular and well-authenticated accounts are given of these little animals forming themselves into packs, and hunting hares or rabbits by scent. When so employed, they 'give tongue' in a feeble, diminutive manner, and in every other respect imitate the manoeuvres of a well-trained pack; nor has any instance been observed in which they have failed to run down their game. Though much persecuted by farmers, the weasel is probably more useful to them than they are willing to believe, as it destroys great numbers of rats and mice; far more than any cat can do, as it is, from its form, enabled to enter their hiding-places, and thus slay them at home; yet we cannot deny that it not unfrequently repays its own services with a tender chicken or a plump pallet.

Amongst the superstitious tales which have been related of the weasel, the following, which are given by Giraldus Cambrensis, may be noticed:— 'A weasel,' he says, 'had brought out her young into a plain for the enjoyment of sun and air, when an insidious kite carried off one of them: concealing herself with the remainder behind some shrubs, grief suggested to her a stratagem of exquisite revenge. She extended herself on a heap of earth, as if dead, within sight of the plunderer, and (as success always increases avidity) the bird

immediately seized her, and flew away, but soon fell down dead by the bite of the poisonous animal.' This story gives an instance of revengeful stratagem of which, we imagine, even the wily weasel is incapable; yet that part which refers to its feigning itself dead is curiously corroborated by an anecdote told by Sir Oswald Mosley of one which he caught, and after repeated blows on the head, carried for some time in his hand, believing it to be dead; but the moment he placed it on the grass, it rose and ran off, as if nothing had occurred, which could scarcely have taken place at the identical instant of liberation, if the previous stillness had been only caused by its being stunned.

The next legend of Giraldus represents the weasel in a very interesting light:— 'A person residing in the castle of Pembroke found a brood of young weasels concealed within a place within his dwelling-house, which he carefully removed and hid: the mother, irritated at the loss of her young, which she had searched for in vain, went to a vessel of milk which had been set aside for the use of the master's son, and raising herself up, polluted it with her deadly poison; thus revenging, as it were, the loss of her young by the destruction of the child. The man observing what had passed, carried the fleece back to its former place; when the weasel, agitated by maternal solicitude, between hope and fear, on finding again her young, began to testify her joy by her cries and actions, and returning quickly to the vessel, overthrew it; thus, in gratitude for the recovery of her own offspring, saving that of her host from danger.'

In a very ancient Breton lay, which is preserved in the collection of Marsic, and which is called 'Elduc,' though originally known by the name of 'Guilheluc, ha Gualadun,' we find the following wondrous fable:— 'When the beautiful Gualadun lay dead, a weasel, creeping from the altar, ran several times over her face; on which the attendant struck at, and killed it. Upon which another weasel appeared, and after exhibiting every sign of grief, ran suddenly off to the woods, and returned with a flower of a beautiful vermilion colour, which she carefully inserted in the mouth of her companion: in an instant the little animal returned to life, and sprang up. Another blow was, however, aimed at him, so that he dropped the flower, which, on being applied to the lips of the damsel, at once caused her to revive, 'expressing her surprise at having slept so long.' And in the early English romance of 'Sir Guy of Warwick,' when the famished Thierry falls asleep at the knees of Guy, a white weasel suddenly jumps out of his mouth, and takes refuge in a crevice of a neighbouring rock, but soon returns again, and runs once more down his throat (not a pleasant tenant, we should think). Upon his awaking, and relating that he had a dream of a 'fair bright sword' and a treasure, Guy goes to the place in which the weasel sought refuge, and there finds both the sword and the treasure.

Theophrastus defines the superstitious man to be he who, in addition to the scrupulousness with which he observes various specified ceremonies, refuses, if a weasel has crossed his path, to proceed until he has thrown three stones over the road.

The stoat (*Mustela erminea*) and the weasel (*M. vulgaris*) are so commonly confounded together, so frequently described under one name, and so similar in their habits, that many persons are inclined to deny their individual existences; yet they are clearly distinct, and though the weasel frequently becomes white in winter, the assumption of the snowy coat does not, and cannot convert it, as it does the stoat, into the ermine of commerce. Several instances have occurred of piebald, or rather skewbald stoats, but this appears to be merely the transition state from the red fur of summer to the white garb of winter.

The stoat and the weasel prey on the same animals; they both form self-constituted packs, and hunt for the advantage of the community; and both are remarkable for the determined boldness of their dispositions. Mr

Bell states that he 'was one day sitting in his room on the ground-floor, with the door open, when a stoat entered, and ran rapidly round the room, snuffing about as if in search of prey. It showed not the least symptoms of alarm at finding itself in unusual quarters, and after a minute or so, quietly went out again.' And the 'Zoologist' gives an instance of a weasel which, after trying round a window for an entrance, stood up on its hind-legs, and remained, earnestly gazing through the pane, undismayed by the furious barking of a little terrier, which was somewhat disturbed by this appearance, until, we regret to say, the window was opened, and the dog suffered to chase and kill the little animal which had come so confidently to the window.

Gwillim, in the 'Display of Heraldrie,' says that the name of ermine is derived from the following circumstance:—'Hee hath his being in the woods of the land of Armenia, whereof hee taketh his name.' The polecat or fitchew (*Mustela putorius*) appears always to have been held in evil odour, both physically and metaphorically, as, perhaps on account of its most offensive smell, it is usually associated by the older writers with things of evil report; thus Shakspeare says—

'There are fairer things than polecats.'
'Out of my door you witch, you hag, you polecat!'
'Tis such another fitchew! marry, a perfumed one:
What do you mean by this haunting of me?'

It is commonly termed foumart, or fulimart, a designation which seems to be a corruption of the Welsh name *ffielbart*. In wooded districts, where the polecat generally abounds, it is too well known by its daring depredations on game-preserves and poultry-yards to need any description. It is curious that both this animal and the stoat have been discovered in the act of catching eels at the season when these eels are supposed to retire into the deep mud for their winter sleep.

Much discussion has only left undecided the question, 'Whether there is any real difference between the pine-weasel or yellow-breasted marten (*Martes abietum*) and the beech or common marten (*Martes foina*) beyond the variety of their colour?' Both kinds have been rendered rare in Britain probably by the value, in olden time, of their skins; for we find 'marten skins' mentioned in the 'Doomsday-Book' as among the treasures of the city of Chester; and also that great quantities of this 'royal fur' were imported from Ireland. Again, in another place, it is enacted that all ships that brought martens' skins to this country were bound to give the king pre-emption of the same, and for that purpose to show them to an officer before any were disposed of, under a penalty of forty shillings—a very considerable sum in the eleventh century. In another part of the book it is recorded that Chester yielded annually to the crown a revenue of £45, and twenty-three timbres of martens' skins. This will recall to the minds of our readers the cloak of King 'Jamie.'

— 'Of crimson velvet piled,
Trimmed with the fur of marten wild.'

We must not, however, imagine, that because this pretty little animal is no longer common in our isle, because there are no longer royal enactments respecting its fur, that the value of the skin has ceased; for prodigious quantities of them are still imported from the pine-forests of North America. Above thirty thousand are yearly brought from Canada, and nearly fifteen thousand from Hudson's Bay. The food of the marten is very similar to that of the other animals of its kind, with the addition, however, of the fragrant tops of the pine branches, a small portion of grain, and, when it can obtain it, honey. The marten (*Martes abietum*) is about seventeen or eighteen inches in length; the tail is bushy, and the body covered with a thick fur of a dark-red colour, becoming gradually paler underneath; the breast and throat are white, or of a fine yellow, deepening towards the cheeks; the feet, which are broad, covered on the sole with thick fur, and fur-

nished with strong claws, seem perfectly adapted for ascending trees.

Marten hunts formerly stood high among the sports of the field; and the old books on the subject warn the huntsman not to suffer the dogs to devour the animal when caught, lest it should poison them. This animal is still hunted in Italy. Dr Fleming states that the marten builds its nest in trees. Dr Harlau describes it as 'frequenting the thickest forests, climbing the trees in search of birds and their eggs, attacking small quadrupeds, and bringing forth in the nest of a squirrel or in holes of trees;' the latter opinion being, we believe, the more correct one, though it is a well-ascertained fact that it occasionally breeds in holes in ruined walls, rocks, or even in the earth. Mr Bell relates that the marten, as well as the fox, will descend to the sea-shore at low tide, and carry off numbers of the large mussels (*Modiola vulgaris*) to feed upon them.

Many persons have succeeded in taming the various species of this family, though they will always be liable to resume their natural habits, and make their escape when an opportunity presents itself. Captain Lyon, in describing the manners of a captive stoat, mentions that though he would take food from the hand, he made it a rule first to use every exertion to bite the friendly fingers which approached him. Buffon tamed several weasels, and recommends as the best mode a gentle stroking of the fur along the back, at the same time threatening it if it attempts to bite. And Dr Richardson gives an account of an otter, of the minx or American species, which passed the day very snugly in its mistress' pocket; only peeping out occasionally when it heard any unusual noise; showing at least that it did not lack its share of the most common weakness of its fellow-Americans, whether biped or quadruped.

THE POST-OFFICE.

If a person unconnected with the Post-Office department were asked to suggest a plan to enable the inhabitants of a thousand towns and cities to correspond with each other, he would most probably think that the simplest and best method would be to let the Post-Office of each town make up a letter-bag daily for every other town, despatch its outward correspondence every night, and receive its inward correspondence every morning. Such a scheme, however, would be absurd and impracticable, because the postmaster of every place would have to make up 999 letter-bags daily; and because letters despatched from every place simultaneously would reach different towns at variable periods.

For postal purposes, London is considered the centre of the kingdom, and is the only place where a letter-bag is made up for every other town, and where the principal portion of the outward correspondence is despatched every night, and the principal portion of the inward correspondence is received every morning. Every other place despatches and receives its London bag at hours varying according to its distance from the metropolis. Again, each provincial town is considered also for postal purposes the centre of two circles, called the distributing and district circles. The radius of the former varies from 12 to 100 miles in length, and of the latter from 1 to 20 miles. The postmaster of the central town makes up no letter-bag for any place (London excepted) beyond the circumference of the distributing circle, and delivers no letters to any one living beyond the limits of the district circle. A letter, therefore, from one distant town to another, if not sent through London, is forwarded on towns situated on the circumferences of the distributing circles, until it reaches one within the circle of which its destination is situated.

Every night about a dozen mails leave London in all directions, and the same number arrive in London every morning. These mails connect the extreme points of the country with the metropolis. Branch mails meet the London ones at various places, to convey the Lon-

don bags to towns situated away from the main routes. These mails form the framework, as it were, of that gigantic locomotive machinery by which the whole correspondence of the country is conveyed from one place to another. The London mails enable many towns situated on the main routes to correspond with each other; but, generally speaking, provincial towns correspond with each other by means of separate cross-road mails. The London and cross-road mails together form that elaborate and complicated network of postal communications with which the whole country is covered. Now—as the departure of one mail depends on the arrival of another, and *vice versa*—the greatest confusion would arise if the utmost punctuality were not observed in the despatch and receipt of mails. Guards, therefore, and other persons who have the conduct of mails, are furnished with time-bills and accurate time-pieces. On the former is entered the precise time at which mails arrive at every office; and postmasters are liable to severe punishment, and mail-contractors to heavy penalties, for any neglect of punctuality.

The general management of the Post-Office is intrusted to Colonel Maberly and Mr Rowland Hill; the former being called the Secretary to the Post-Office, and the latter the Secretary to the Postmaster-General. Each is assisted by a large staff of clerks. Colonel Maberly attends to the numerous complaints of the public against the department, and watches over the conduct of the subordinate officials. Mr Hill attends to the Money-Order department, and to the means for carrying into effect his celebrated plan of cheap postage, additional public accommodation, and economical working of the department. Hundreds of communications are addressed to the secretaries daily from the deputy-postmasters and the public. A great portion of the communications from the former are intended for the Money-Order, Ship-Letter, Dead-Letter, and Accountants' departments, which are located in or near St Martins le Grand. The Missing-Letter department is conducted by a special staff of clerks, under the immediate superintendence of Colonel Maberly.

When a money-letter is lost, the time and place of posting, and the address of the letter, are ascertained from the complaining parties, and the names of the officials through whose hands it ought to have passed from the local postmasters. If the offices A, B, C, D make up letter-bags for each other, and money-letters are generally lost in passing through the offices A D, B D, C D, the suspected office is D; because it is more likely that there is a dishonest functionary in D than in each of the other three offices A, B, and C. Again, the same clerks are not allowed always to work together. If, therefore, E, F, G, H are clerks in an office, and money-letters are generally lost when E H, F H, G H are on duty together, H will be the suspected clerk. A trap is therefore set to detect him. A letter containing coin is purposely posted so that it may pass through his hands; and if it is found that it has not been despatched from the office at the proper time, it will most probably be discovered secreted on his person, or in some place to which he has had access.

Letters may be delayed by being put into the wrong letter-bag, or by a postmaster not forwarding them by the first mail. As they bear, however, the dated postmark of each office through which they pass, and as every postmark has some private mark to show at what hour of the day letters are posted, the cause of delay, and the official parties to blame, can easily be discovered. A vast number of complaints respecting delay in the transmission of correspondence are received daily at the General Post-Office. Some demand compensation for losses to which they have been subjected through the delay of their letters; others merely detail the inconvenience or loss they have sustained; numbers declare that they complain only because they consider it their duty to the public to expose and check irregularities; many demand imperiously the immediate punishment of the postmaster in fault; almost all are

convinced that the delay is the fault of the Post-Office; and some, whose letters of complaint can scarcely be deciphered, are ready to make oath that their correspondence was legibly addressed. Every person who complains is treated alike respectfully. Scarcely the slightest difference is made in the form or degree of attention with which a complaint is investigated, no matter whether it comes from a duke or a mechanic. The first thing done is to obtain the cover of the letter delayed, to examine the post-marks on it; and the next thing is to call on the local postmasters through whose offices it has passed for an explanation. Generally speaking, the fault is found to rest with correspondents in not posting their letters in proper time, in not addressing them correctly, or in some neglect of Post-Office rules. If any wilful or careless neglect is proved against a postmaster, he would be visited with severe censure or dismissal.

Amongst the higher class of Post-Office officials are those called 'surveyors.' These officers are stationed in different parts of the kingdom, with a number of assistants. Each surveyor superintends an extensive district, consisting of several counties. The duties of surveyors are to travel over their districts, to investigate personally any very serious complaint against an office, and to see that the public in every part of the kingdom is, as far as it is practicable, properly accommodated with Post-Office facilities; they have also to assume the superintendence of all offices vacated by the death or dismissal of postmasters, to see that all contracts for conveying mails are rigidly observed, and to receive reports of every error which is likely to inconvenience the public or the department which one postmaster can detect in another.

In England, where the social affections are highly cultivated, where education is generally diffused, and where commercial enterprise and facilities for locomotion separate friends and acquaintances, the amount of correspondence is enormous, and the loss or delay of letters is of great importance, because scarcely the slightest procrastination in the delivery of a letter but what causes some loss or inconvenience; and the more perfect the working of the Post-Office department, the more liable is the slightest irregularity to produce inconvenience, because an error in the transmission of correspondence is less likely to be calculated upon. How many a person has arrived too late to attend the deathbed of a parent or child—has lost a character for honesty, or a reputation for solvency—or has gone on a voyage in an agony of suspense and affliction, through the loss or delay of a letter! How many cruel estrangements in the affairs of love and friendship have been caused through the carelessness of the Post-Office! The history of the human soul and its progress towards wisdom and happiness, the records of the human heart and of its holiest affections, are often written in the familiar correspondence of absent friends and relatives; and the safe and regular transmission of that correspondence compensates for the deprivation of personal intercourse, and cheers the domestic hearths of tens of thousands of all classes in this country.

It is owing to the urgent necessity for the working of the Post-Office department to be conducted with the utmost regularity, and to the difficulty of persons unconnected with it understanding its curious and complicated machinery, that the government has never allowed any but those who have displayed an extraordinary aptitude for the task to interfere with, or introduce any great innovation into its management. Within the last century and a-half only two strangers to the department have been permitted to materially change the system by which it has been conducted—namely, Mr Palmer and Mr Rowland Hill. The former invented and perfected that scheme for the transmission of correspondence throughout the kingdom, which has been described at the commencement of this article; and the latter introduced a cheap and uniform postage, prepaid by stamps, and charged by weight. Both of

these distinguished men suggested their improvements at peculiar periods: Mr Palmer when the art of road-making in England had arrived at great perfection, which enabled a complete plan of postal communication throughout the country to be effected; and Mr Hill when education amongst all classes had been extensively diffused, which enabled the government to derive almost as large a revenue by a cheap postage from the many as by an expensive postage from the few.

There have always been men of extraordinary ability who have arisen at particular periods to take advantage of an accomplishment of the past, and link it with some improvement of the present; and who, by not being fettered by official details and minute difficulties, are enabled to perceive instinctively that there cannot possibly be a substantial objection against a simple and grand scheme of obviously vast and universal benefit to the community. The scheme which Mr Hill has grafted on that of Mr Palmer will, with that perfect organisation of every department of the Post-Office, and the military subordination of its 30,000 officials, go far to make the English Post-Office one of the most interesting and perfect establishments in the world, and suitable for a community of as high a state of civilisation as the present generation is likely to witness.

THE YOUTH OF TALLEYRAND.

M. DE TALLEYRAND was born in Paris in 1754. At that period it was the general custom in noble families to send out their infants to be nursed in the provinces. The gay mother, after a brief retirement, resumed her place in the brilliant court circle, seldom finding leisure to cast away a thought on the poor little being to whom she had given birth, and who, consigned to the care of a hired nurse, who lived perhaps many miles distant, was left to vegetate for years.

So it fared with Charles-Maurice, eldest son of the Count de Talleyrand. Exiled from his father's house at the hour of his birth, he was carried to a distant village by a nurse whose trade it was to bring up children 'well or ill, as it happened,' according to the prince's own expression. This nurse was handsomely paid, and regularly gave excellent accounts of the child. Her 'darling little Charlot was the pride of the country with his rosy cheeks and sturdy limbs. He was well fed, well dressed; what more could a baby want?'

'What more indeed?' thought his lady-mother; that is, whenever she had time to think about the matter at all; but this was not often; for court duties and court pleasures absorbed her every faculty, and occupied every moment.

Time rolled on. Another son was born to the Count de Talleyrand; and, like his elder brother, he came into the world strong and healthy, cast in the mould of a vigorous race. He shared the lot of Charles-Maurice, being sent to the village where the latter was growing up ignorant and neglected, without the fear of God or man before his eyes. Till the arrival of the little Archambaud, he had never seen the face of a relative. His mother, occupied with pleasure, his father with ambition, thought not of him. It is singular that while the latter died young, without having obtained the renown he sought, and the former ended a long life in comparative poverty, it was reserved for their neglected child to make Europe ring with his fame, and to amass an enormous fortune.

When Charles-Maurice had entered his eighth year, it happened that his father's youngest brother, the captain of a ship-of-war, and a Knight of Malta, returned from a distant expedition. After greeting the elder members of his family, he inquired for his little nephews, and felt both shocked and surprised at their parents' indifference towards them. It was the depth of winter; the ground was covered with snow, the roads were difficult and dangerous; but the warm-hearted sailor braved all obstacles, and set out on horseback to visit his little

relatives. It was late in the afternoon when he approached the village, and he bethought him of inquiring the way to the house of Nurse Rigaut. Looking round, he saw on the hill a pale, thin child, with long fair hair flowing on his shoulders; he was busy setting a bird-trap on the snow. The captain called him; and as the little fellow approached, the kind sailor saw with pain that he was lame, and leant for support on a small crutch.

'Hollo! my boy; can you tell me where Dame Rigaut lives?'

'Certainly,' said the child smiling. 'I will show you the way on one condition.'

'Come, then, make haste, my lad; I'll pay you handsomely for your guidance.'

'Nonsense,' replied the child reddening: 'my condition is, that you will let me ride on your horse to nurse's door. I don't want your money.'

'Mount, then, my boy,' said the captain, reaching down his hand, and watching with surprise the agility with which the child, cripple as he was, managed to climb on the tall saddle.

Holding his little guide carefully before him, the captain reached the house of Dame Rigaut. He told the child to hold his horse for a moment, and entered the door: nurse came to meet him. What passed between them? Probably nothing very amicable; for the young listener outside could distinguish a sound of weeping—feminine lamentations overborne by loud masculine reprimands. Suddenly the sailor rushed out, seized the shivering boy, raised him, and held him closely embraced with one arm, while with the other he made good use of his whip in keeping off Nurse Rigaut, who wanted to regain possession of her 'darling Charlot.' It was the work of a moment to mount his horse, and with the child before him, to retrace his steps, without permitting the perfidious nurse even to say adieu to her charge. As they rode on, little Charles-Maurice learned that his captor was his uncle: an honest sailor, who, in a transport of indignation against the woman to whose negligence his nephew owed a lifelong lameness, would not have him a moment longer beneath her roof. In his anxiety about the heir of his house, he totally forgot his brother's younger son, who accordingly remained with the nurse.

From the first town where he stopped, he wrote to his brother to announce what he had done; and on arriving in Paris, he learned that the Count de Talleyrand was with the army in Flanders, and that the countess was in attendance on the queen at Versailles. However, she had provided a person to take charge of her son, and place him in the college of Louis-le-Grand. The captain had intended to take him on board his vessel—the St Joseph—and bring him up to the naval profession; but his lameness rendering this impracticable, the kind sailor took leave of his poor deserted little nephew, and set out for Toulon. A few months afterwards his vessel was shipwrecked, and he and all his crew perished. Had Charles-Maurice been a fine stout boy, his history would have terminated here; but Providence reserved the poor lame child for an illustrious destiny.

At college, the boy distinguished himself by his talents and application, carrying off the first prizes, and rising rapidly towards the upper classes. Yet his life was but a sad one; few indulgences, and no vacations passed at home, fell to his lot. His mother rarely visited him, and when she did, she came accompanied by a celebrated surgeon, who examined his lame leg, bandaged it tightly, dragged it, cauterised the nerve, and put the child to such torture, that he dreaded nothing so much as a summons to the parlour to meet his mother.

Years passed on: his father died, and Charles-Maurice found himself Count de Talleyrand, and head of that branch of his family. His brother Archambaud had left the abode of Nurse Rigaut with better fortune than himself; for he had escaped accidents, and his

limbs were straight and well-formed. On the day that Charles-Maurice had successfully completed his studies at the college of Louis-le-Grand, a pale, stern-looking man, wearing a cassock, summoned him from amongst his comrades, and commanded him to follow him to the clerical seminary of St Sulpice. The sentence was without appeal. He learned from the superior that his family had decided to deprive him of his birthright, and transfer it to his younger brother.

'And wherefore?' asked the youth.

'Because he is not a cripple,' was the cruel reply.

The words entered like iron into the victim's soul; they changed his very nature, and made the youth what the Prince de Talleyrand afterwards appeared. In proud and bitter silence he donned the offered cassock; and none may know what passed within, for never, even to his most intimate friends, did he allude to the subject. Now in his youth, as afterwards in mature age, his resolution was taken and acted on immediately. He expressed neither grief nor a desire for the reversal of the decree; he knew this would be vain; but, in appearance at least, submitted patiently to the strict rules of the house. Notwithstanding his lameness, he possessed considerable strength and activity of body; but among his companions his usual weapon of defence was his tongue. Young and old dreaded his caustic, biting sentences, while the influence and power which his master-mind asserted and maintained were quite marvellous. At the seminary he became as distinguished as at the college. There still survive a few old clergymen who can recall the eloquent orations of the young student at the weekly exhibitions at St Sulpice. Some of these compositions have been preserved: they are chiefly remarkable for the artful manner in which the passions of the auditory are enlisted against the adverse side, and their sense of the ludicrous excited at its expense.

At the age of seventeen, M. de Talleyrand quitted the seminary, in order to complete his theological studies at the Sorbonne. The few days which intervened were passed by him at the family residence. Up to that period he had never spent a night beneath the parental roof. Well might Rousseau fulminate his burning reproofs against the high-born mothers of that time, whom he designates 'merciless stepmothers.' M. de Talleyrand was so fortunate as to have for his preceptor an excellent man, not many years older than himself. A strong and lasting affection subsisted between them. His 'dear father Langlois' received from him a liberal pension till the end of his days; and up to the year 1828, the period of the good old abbé's death, his antiquated figure, attired in the costume of the preceding century, might have been constantly seen in the prince's splendid reception-rooms, his huge snuff-box and coloured pocket-handkerchief figuring next rich uniforms and brilliant orders. When he spoke, his former pupil listened with respectful deference. Indeed it is not too much to assert, that whatever good was mingled with the character of the astute diplomatist, might fairly be traced to the early instruction of the Abbé Langlois.

The young Abbé de Talleyrand's first appearance in the gay society of Paris was at the hotel of Madame de Brignolé, who was in the habit of receiving the very *élite* of the fashionable world, together with the *fions* of the day. The young man seated himself in a remote corner, so as to observe the passing scene without taking part in it. Soon a modest, retiring-looking man came and placed himself near him. This was Philidor, the celebrated chess-player, who, being a frequent visitor at the house, was able and willing to point out the different distinguished guests to his uninitiated neighbour. D'Alembert, Diderot, and other great men were there, and Philidor was complacently commenting on them, for the young abbé's edification, when their quiet corner was suddenly invaded by two young hussar officers, a captain and lieutenant in a regiment especially favoured by the unhappy queen Marie-Antoinette,

and also noted for the free and impertinent manners of the young men who composed it. The two officers were laughing heartily at some exquisite jest between themselves.

'Come into this corner,' said one, 'and I'll finish the story; the end of it must be reserved for your private ear.'

'The corner is taken,' replied the other: 'I see Philidor there talking to some young raven just fledged, and flown from the seminary.'

'They'll give up their places. I know Philidor's temper: he'll submit, and the abbé will follow his example.' So saying, they approached the two occupiers of the corner, and with the coolest impertinence began to annoy them by their words and gestures. Philidor, whose pacific and timid character was well known, immediately prepared to retreat. He cast an imploring glance at the abbé, complained of the heat of the room, and finally rose and glided away. The Chevalier de Boufflers—one of the officers—took instant possession of the vacant chair, and turning towards the young abbé, stared at him with an insolent expression. The lieutenant took up his position at the other side, and looked at Talleyrand in a manner not less offensive. Not the slightest notice, however, did the young man take of either, until the officer, tired of his *sang-froid*, inquired 'if he did not find the heat oppressive?' and added the advice to 'imitate his friend, and seek cooler air in the antechamber.' Talleyrand, with the utmost politeness, 'thanked the officer for his considerate kindness; but begged to assure him that his own lungs were so very delicate, that he would fear to encounter the cold air.'

The angry blood mounted in the officer's cheek: he was a youth just come from Normandy, and spoke with his native accent in all its purity.

'You look young, my dear abbé,' he said; 'perhaps you have not been at school, and are not aware that you have yet many things to learn: amongst the rest'—

'A thousand pardons!' interrupted the abbé, standing up, looking full at his adversary, and imitating to perfection the Norman accent. 'I assure you I have been at school; I learned all my letters, and I know that AB (abbé) is not CD (*céder*, yield); and, moreover, that your EP (*épée*, sword) will not make me OT (*ôter*, go away).' By this time a number of the guests had collected, and received Talleyrand's sally with a peal of hearty laughter. The Chevalier de Boufflers himself applauded; but the discomfited Norman, having no reply ready, took himself off as fast as possible. Madame du Deffand happened to be in the room. She heard the repartee, and expressed a wish to have its author introduced to her. This was done by De Boufflers himself. The illustrious lady, who was blind, invited the young abbé to be seated next her. She passed her venerable hand over his face, in order to examine the features, which she could not see, and then said, 'Go, young man; nature has endowed you with her richest gifts. She has placed it in your power fully to redeem the wrongs of fortune.'

The Abbé de Talleyrand soon became known in the highest literary and political circles; his subsequent career belongs to the eventful history of the period. It is rather singular that he attached his name to the first popular journal that ever appeared in France. 'La Feuille Villageoise,' conducted by the Abbé Cerutti, exercised much influence on the first events in the Revolution of 1789. In juxtaposition with articles from the fiery pen of Mirabeau, or bearing the impress of Cerutti's bitterly-ironical genius, the historian of to-day studies still with interest essays exhibiting the calm, steady reasoning of Talleyrand: for example, those on the 'Reform in National Education,' 'On the Abuses of Power,' 'On the Unity of Weights and Measures,' &c. &c. Sieyès and Mirabeau professed a high esteem for the talents of the young Talleyrand. Mirabeau frequently declared that he considered him the only man

capable of succeeding him in the direction of the moderate party of the time.

Talleyrand died at Paris, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, on the 17th of May 1838. By his will he has strictly prohibited his heirs from publishing his memoirs—which he wrote himself, and which are, it is said, deposited in England—until thirty years shall have expired from the day of his death. Many a state mystery and many a grand secret in diplomacy will no doubt be revealed to the curious public of 1868. Till then, we must content ourselves with a few rambling records of that grand mover of the wires of the political puppet-show—Charles-Maurice Prince de Talleyrand.

TRADESMEN'S TOKENS.

'THE tokens which every tavern and tipping-house (in the days of late anarchy among us) presumed to stamp and utter for immediate exchange, as they were passable through the neighbourhood, which, though seldom reaching further than the next street or two, may happily, in after-times, come to exercise and busy the learned critic what they should signify.' Such, in the words of Evelyn, is the motto prefixed to a recently-published work,* from which many interesting particulars may be gathered relating to the least valuable portion of our copper coinage; a currency which, though of little intrinsic worth, has played no insignificant part in popular finance. The coins or tokens in question represent a period—1648 to 1672—in which transpired some of the most momentous events in our national history; and the 'effigies' stamped on them not unfrequently indicate the political opinions of those by whom they were issued, but mostly a miniature representation of the sign of the house. 'Few persons,' observes Mr Akerman, 'will require to be reminded that every tradesman once had his particular sign, and that, when the houses in streets were not numbered, such a practice was not without its use. A few shops and houses of business may yet be found in London, especially the old-established ones, that have not entirely discarded their signs, and they may still be seen occupying the place of a pane in the window. One or two bankers, too, do not disdain to exhibit their ancient cognizance over the door. Messrs Hoare display the Golden Bottle over the entrance of their elegant new house of business. Childs, the bankers, bore the Mari-gold, which may still be seen within their office.'

Signs, like everything else, must submit to change; and to quote the words of one whom Captain Smyth would call a 'brackish poet'—

Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
Evil and good, have had their title of talk,
And filled their sign-posts then, like Wellesley now.'

But we are reminded that there are other mutations: who does not remember Rip van Winkle's astonishment on noticing that the comfortable visage of George III. on a swinging sign had, by a touch of painter's craft, been made to do duty as General Washington; and, another instance, where the likeness of that good old English gentleman, Sir Roger de Coverley, became the Saracen's Head? Mr Akerman says, 'Everybody knows that the "Satyr and Bacchanals" became in due time the "Satyr and Bag o' Nails," and that the Puritan "God encompasseth Us" was profaned to "The Goat and Compasses!" that the gallant Sir Cloudesley lives in the "Ship and Shovel;" and that the faithful

governor of Calais—"Caton Fidèle"—is immortalised in the "Cat and Fiddle!"'

Poets have not disdained to exercise their pens on the subject of signs: the specimen quoted above affords one instance: here is another, written about the beginning of last century:—

'I'm amazed at the signs
As I pass through the town,
To see the odd mixture—
A Magpie and a Crow;
The Whale and the Crow;
The Razor and Hen;
The Leg and Seven Stars;
The Axe and the Bottle;
The Sun and the Lute;
The Eagle and Child;
The Shovel and Boot.'

With these preliminary remarks concerning signs, we pass to the subject of tokens or coins. The circulating medium is now so much a matter of course, that we seldom think of the inconveniences to which a different state of things would expose us. In the Saxon days, the chief coin was a penny, stamped in silver, and weighing twenty-four grains, with a very limited supply of halves and quarters. The weight of this coin was liable to be varied at the caprice of rulers; and from the reign of Harold downwards, it was gradually reduced, until the penny became a mere spangle, something like Turkish *paras*, which fly from a dealer's hand under a good puff of wind. In Elizabeth's reign, proposals were made to stamp a penny in baser metal; but for certain reasons—history does not tell us if they were good ones—her virgin majesty resolutely opposed the project. But so small was the supply of halfpence and farthings, that the common people were greatly embarrassed in making small purchases, and subjected to loss; for, as is stated in a petition to parliament of that period, if they bought any article of less value than a penny, they lost the difference for want of small change. The gentry also were as much perplexed for *petty money* to give away as alms to the mendicants who then swarmed over the whole country. Examples still exist of pennies cut into halves and quarters as a remedy for the inconvenience; besides which, a quantity of thin light coins called 'black money' found its way hither from the continent; and a coinage issued by the abbots filled some of the minor channels of circulation. Leadens dumps, too, passed from hand to hand, and in some places were still current so lately as 1696. Many of our old church books contain entries of sums paid 'for moulds to cast tokens in,' and of payments to 'the plomer for tokens.'

Eventually, a silver coin, value three-farthings, was issued under Elizabeth's authority; but it was so exceedingly small and light, as to be scarcely available for practical purposes. At the same period 'lead, tin, latten, and even leather, were stamped by grocers, vintners, chandlers, and alehouse keepers, in great numbers; and as they were only to be repaid to the same shop from whence they were received, the loss to the poor was most grievous.' The impossibility of longer delaying an improvement led to the stamping of some patterns in copper. It was not, however, until the reign of James (1613) that an attempt was made to supersede the spurious and heterogeneous currency by royal proclamation, which at the same time announced that letters-patent had been granted to Lord Harrington 'to make such a competent quantity of farthing tokens of copper as might be conveniently issued amongst his majesty's subjects within the realms of England and Ireland, and the dominion of Wales. . . . the said farthing tokens to be made exactly and artificially of copper by engines and instruments, having on the one side two sceptres crossing under one diadem; and on the other side a harp crowned, with the king's title, JACOBUS DEI GRATIA MAGNÆ BRITANNIÆ FRANCIE ET HIBERNIÆ REX; such farthing tokens to pass for the value of farthings within the king's realms and dominions, with the liking and consent of his loving subjects.'

* *Tradesmen's Tokens, Current in London and its Vicinity between the Years 1640 and 1672.* Described from the Originals in the British Museum, and in several Private Collections. By John Yonge Akerman, Fellow and Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London. London: J. R. Smith. 1849.

But it was not easy to break through long-established custom; and many parties were interested in the circulation of the illegitimate coinage, which, however, after the accession of Charles I., was made a penal offence. The coiners of farthings then sold twenty-one shillings' worth for every twenty shillings sterling; but the fabricators of tokens gave twenty-six shillings' worth for the same amount; much in the same way as Brummagem halfpence are schemed into circulation in the present day. The Star Chamber was sometimes called on to interfere in defence of the law. A complaint laid before that court called attention to 'the number of counterfeit pieces in circulation, and to the practice of knavish employers, who paid them for wages to their workmen and labourers in greater quantities than was ever contemplated by government.' 'Workmen,' it was alleged, 'were often paid a whole week's wages in these farthing tokens, by people who bought large quantities at cheap rates, upon which they thus realised considerable profit.' Two proclamations followed in consequence, in 1633 and following year: the first declared 'the counterfeiters of farthing tokens and their abettors, upon conviction, to be liable to a fine of one hundred pounds, to be set in the pillory in Cheapside, and thence whipped through the streets to Bridewell, where they were to be kept to hard work.' And the second declared further, 'that no one should pay above two-pence in farthings at one time; and it was to be unlawful for force such farthing tokens, in either great or small quantities, upon workmen, labourers, and other persons of humble vocations.'

Subsequently, in 1635, 1636, as the evils complained of were but little diminished, other proclamations were issued, one of which announced 'a new coinage of these farthings of copper with a piece of brass in the centre. . . . a device by which they might be distinguished from all others, and the people protected from fraud.' Mr Akerman here introduces in a note an instance of the waggish humour of the day:—'At this period the red cross on the door of a house was a sign that the Plague, or, as it was then designated, "the Sickness," had seized on the inmates. The eruptions on the bodies of the infected persons were termed *tokens*. The Earl of Arundel, the patentee of these farthings, having locked up the mint-house, some wag wrote on the door, "Lord have mercy upon us, for this house is full of tokens!"'

As may naturally be supposed, the civil commotions which soon afterwards broke out greatly retarded the general circulation of the new farthings, and at the same time favoured the traffic in unlawful coins, causing serious distress; so that, as we read, in 1644 'the doors of the Parliament House were daily besieged by fruitwomen, fishwomen, and others who obtained a livelihood by selling small wares. Some of these poor creatures had, says a pamphlet of the day, as much as ten or twenty shillings in farthing tokens, while many tradesmen had even sixty pounds' worth. . . . Such was the lamentable state of a part of the English coinage just previous to the death of Charles on the scaffold. Encouraged by the civil distractions, tavern-keepers and tradesmen began to issue their tokens, struck in brass, and bearing their name and calling. Some of the devices and legends are curious enough: some blazon their utterers' loyalty when many were glad to sink politics and save their property from confiscation; and tokens with the *king's head* jingled in the citizen's pocket with the shillings and sixpences of "the Cæsars of England," as witty Fuller styled the Commonwealth. Some bore promises to pay, in sterling coin, on demand: some circulated with the request, "Though I'm but brass, yet let me pass;" while others were inscribed with profane attempts at wit, as the tokens of a provincial tallow-chandler—"TOWCH NOT MINE ANOINTED, AND DO MY PROFITS NO HARM." Several, issued by keepers of coffee-houses, show a half-length figure of a man, or a hand emerging from a cloud holding a coffee-pot, and pouring the contents

into a cup. Others exhibit tobacco-pipes as well as coffee-cups, thus showing that the grave citizens of that day could appreciate soothing luxuries as well as the "fast" men who frequent modern divans. One among these tokens bears testimony to the cruel character of a popular recreation then in favour: it represents a man about to throw a stick at a cock, with the legend, WILL BRANDON AT Y^e HAVE AT IT ON DOWGATE HILL, HIS HALF PENY. Another bears three ermine spots, with the inscription, ANNE ADKINS FOR NECESSARY CHANGE. In fact it would be difficult to mention an object which has not been made use of as a device: thus we find a man dipping candles, the man in the moon, the pope's head, with beehives, helmets, and gridirons innumerable. In this way, as Mr Akerman writes, 'while the kingdom was divided by faction, every tradesman issued his *halfpenny* or his *farthing token*, till impunity led some to stamp even pledges for a penny. This is the money for which the virtuous Evelyn expresses his contempt, and which he regarded as the spawn of the hydra of rebellion.'

The state of things here indicated has had its parallel in later times: in Paris during the First Revolution; in the United States during the short war with England in 1814; and, as the writer well remembers, in New York in the disastrous year of panic, 1837, 'small change' became so scarce, that hundreds of dealers issued paper-notes for sums varying from six to fifty cents. It was next to impossible to convert these into specie, for most of them, though payable on demand, were only redeemable in 'shoes,' 'dry-goods,' or 'hardware.' On some the inscription ran—'Good for groceries at SAMPSON MOORE'S;' or, 'Good for a buster and cold slice. TOM SWEENEY.' The annoyance and loss of time, as well as value, attendant on such perturbations, must, as show-bills say, 'be seen (or felt) to be duly appreciated.'

Mr Akerman gives us, 'by way of rider,' a few notes, which may be said to complete the history of the farthing:—'In the year 1649 patterns were struck in copper, bearing on one side a shield, charged with the cross of England, and the legend, FARTHING TOKENS OF ENGLAND—Reverse, a shield charged with the Irish harp, and the legend, FOR NECESSITY OF CHANGE, 1649.' Another was, FOR THE RELEEF OF THE POOR; and a third, ENGLAND'S FARTHING; and some mark the period of Cromwell's authority, being inscribed OLIVAR PRO. ENG. SC. IRL.—CHARITIE AND CHANGE; besides others with different devices and legends. 'From this period' (1684), pursues the author, 'the farthings of England have been struck in copper of about the size of those now current; and in the reign of Anne, an attempt was made to render their type classical; but this was not an age for such a consummation. Several patterns were struck at this time, which are remarkable for spiritless design, though the workmanship of some is superior. One of these patterns is of considerable rarity. It has the figure of Britannia holding a spear and an olive branch, with the legend BELLO. ET. PACE in indented letters on a raised border; a most inelegant fancy, revived in our own times on the pennies of George III. The ordinary current farthing of Anne (date 1714) has Britannia seated with the same symbols, and is far less rare than popular tradition has led many to suppose, a specimen being easily procurable of any dealer in coins.'

Mr Akerman, who is already well known by his writing on numismatics, has thus shown how an apparently dreary subject may be made interesting. Without going to the full extent of his enthusiasm in such studies, we agree with him that *tokens* are regarded as memorials of utility and interest to the antiquary, the topographer, and the genealogist, who discovers in them many records of customs, persons, and places, all contributing to the sub-current of our history. In these mementos of troublous times, and ill-constructed laws relating to the currency, even the statesman may find matter for serious reflection; and many a now proud

and titled family may trace an ancestor in some dealer and chapman, whose name and calling are contained within the circumscribed area of a tradesman's token.'

CRIME AND GENIUS.

SOME two years and eight months back, a youth, then entered upon his thirteenth year, was placed at the bar of the Juxtiary Court at Perth, accused of stealing, or being in company with others who stole, some loaves of bread from a cart on the Perth Road, Dundee. Though young in years, he was, in legal phraseology, old in crime. 'Previous conviction' formed the concluding words of the libel on which he was charged, and the new conviction obtained sealed his fate, almost for time and eternity. At thirteen years of age, for stealing a loaf of bread—such is the merciful state of our criminal law—this child received sentence of seven years' transportation! and no doubt would have been sent to associate, for the most eventful period of human existence, with the polluted and abandoned, had something like a providential occurrence not taken place. It so happened that, after coming back to the prison, waiting to be shipped off to a foreign land, he was attacked with a disease in the elbow joint. Whether his journey to a penal settlement was prevented by this cause, we are not prepared to say; but certain it is, from the day he returned from the Juxtiary Court at Perth, he has had to inhabit one of the cells in the criminal jail of Dundee. On visiting his lonely apartment the other day, we found him seated on a small chest, busily employed in mending the binding of books belonging to the library, an occupation, we are given to understand, in which he takes great delight. Around him lay on the floor of his cell several works on mathematics and astronomy, while the walls were covered with a number of maps of various countries in the world. If there was any lack of provision for the stomach, there was no want of food for the mind. After some interesting conversation with the youth, in order to test his powers, the indefatigable teacher in the prison, Mr Lindsay, who accompanied us, requested him to take up the slate, and determine the position of the moon on a given day; which he accomplished in a few seconds. On questioning him as to his early habits, he admitted that he had been from his earliest years a depredator; had attended the Episcopal church along with his stepfather and mother, and occasionally the Sabbath-school; but his mind at the time led him more frequently to seek the company of other boys older and more dexterous in thieving than himself.

Passing to a neighbouring cell along with the teacher, we were introduced to another youth between sixteen and seventeen years of age. He was seated in his narrow abode on a low box, picking old ropes; and though there was wanting the intellectual provision which the other culprit had at command, we soon felt convinced that here also the prison walls had attractions. Our attention was first called to a wooden erection in the corner of the cell; it was rough workmanship, for the only tool that had been engaged in its carving and erection was the fragment of a shoemaker's knife, stuck into a weaver's pin, which somehow or other had come into his possession, the blade of which was scarcely an inch and a-half in length. On looking into this piece of rough mechanism, we perceived a water-clock in full and regular movement, the whole so adjusted, that the hands on the dial-plate indicated time with considerable accuracy. Several other pieces of mechanism were shown us by the youth, of his own construction, with no other tool, as we were assured all along, than the piece of a shoemaker's knife. The fate of the youth, like the other one, was somewhat hard. He had been condemned to banishment for life for a crime of which, at the bar of the court, he declared his innocence, and from which declaration he has never yet swerved. The offence of which he was accused was a very heinous one indeed—setting fire to a mill, for the sake of plunder, in the month of January last. A reward was offered for the guilty person, and two brothers, along with a *socius criminis*, were the chief witnesses, whose testimony the charge was proven, and sentence of banishment for life was recorded against two youths, both of whom protested that they were innocent of the offence laid to their charge. One of the two has been sent off to the settlements; but the other, the one named above, who perseveres in the maintenance of his innocence, being under age, remains in prison.—*North-ers Warbler*.

GUARDIAN ANGELS.

When daylight has departed, and earth is hushed to rest,
When little birds are folded safe within the parent nest,
When on the closed flowers the blessed night-dews weep,
And stars look down in beauty upon the slumbering deep—

Unseen by mortal eyes, in the stillness of the night,
There are those who wander o'er the earth in robes of airy light;
Sweet messengers of love and hope, they journey to and fro,
And consolation follows in their footsteps as they go.

What are the heart's presentiments of coming joy or pain,
But gently-whispered warnings of that guardian angel train?
The signals of their sympathy, the tokens of their care,
The sighings of their sorrow o'er the woes that flesh must bear.

We hear them in our slumbers, and waking fancy deems
That busy thought was wandering in the fairy land of dreams;
But the low sweet tones we listened were strains that angels sing,
For ministering spirits with our souls were communing.

And when morning breaks above us, and we wake to busy day,
These angels 'go before,' to guide and 'keep us in our way';
When our feeble footsteps falter, all away and alone,
In their arms they gently bear us, 'lest we dash against a stone.'

In our journeyings, in our restings, on the land, or on the sea,
In our solitude and sorrow, in our gatherings and glee,
In the day of degradation, in the hour of joy and pride,
Those pure and watchful ministers are ever by our side.

Oh Thou whom angels worshipped ere Time or we began,
And whose divine compassion gave their guardianship to man,
Throughout this mortal warfare let them still my champions be,
And in the last stern conflict 'give them charge concerning me!'

JESSY JONES.

GROWTH OF NEW YORK.

New York is increasing with a rapidity hitherto unparalleled, and bids fair soon to be among the first cities in the world. New York, Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Jersey City, and Hoboken, are essentially one city, as much as London, with its conglomeration of towns, is one city. These multitudes, gathered round the magnificent harbour at the mouth of the Hudson, are spreading rapidly on both sides of the East River and of the North River, and within five years, will probably number one million of people. The marts of merchandise are crowded into the lower parts of the Manhattan island, extending one or two miles up the island, and from river to river; while the dwellings of the merchants are rising like spring vegetation, in long lines of princely streets, on the shore of the Jerseys, upon the Long-Island shore—where they receive the name of Brooklyn and Williamsburg—and along the magnificent avenues of Bloomingdale and Harlem. Greenwich and Chelsea, on the North River side, and Yorkville upon the East River, formerly thriving towns, four or five miles from the city, are already swallowed up by the swelling inundation. But in addition to this horizontal growth, there is a vertical growth, which is very important, though but little thought of. New York is daily rising into the air, as well as spreading along the ground. The roofs are daily torn from the houses and from the stores, and two or three additional storeys added. Thus a new city is being rapidly built upon the top of the old one. Decayed buildings, two or three storeys high, are replaced by massive structures, rising seven or eight storeys into the air.—*Canada Temperance Advocate*.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

Light, that makes things seen, makes some things invisible. Were it not for darkness and the shadow of the earth, the noblest of creation had remained unseen, and the stars in heaven as invisible as on the fourth day, when they were created above the horizon with the sun, or there was not an eye to behold them. The great mystery of religion is expressed by adumbration; and in the noblest parts of Jewish types we find the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat. Life itself is but the shadow of death, and souls departed but the shadows of the living. All things fall under this name. The sun itself is but the dark Simulachrum, and light but the shadow of God.—*Sir Thomas Brown*.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, High Street, Edinburgh. Also sold by D. CHAMBERS, 20 Argyll Street, Glasgow; W. S. ORR, 147 Strand, London; and J. M'GLASHAN, 21 D'Olier Street, Dublin.—Printed by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Edinburgh.